



National Touring Exhibit of
Deaf Culture Art

Elements of a Culture:
Visions by Deaf Artists

McLeod Suites
Curry Student Center
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Gallery Guide

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introduction

ELEMENTS OF A CULTURE: VISIONS BY DEAF ARTISTS

The Touring Exhibit of Deaf Culture Art premiered at the Bank of America Gallery in Seattle, WA in October of 1999 and in February 2000 was shown at the Switzer Gallery at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, NY. It will open on April 27th, 2000, during the American Sign Language Festival at Northeastern University in Boston, MA, where it will remain until May 16th. From Boston, the exhibit is scheduled to travel to Newport, KY, Miami, FL, St. Paul, MN and Oakland, CA.

Deaf people make up a separate, distinct and proud culture. Deaf artists identify themselves not as persons with a disability – “little ‘d’ deaf” – but as members of a linguistic minority – “capital ‘D’ Deaf” – hence not objects to be “fixed” but people to be celebrated. Deaf Art is like other genres of minority art in communicating universals of minority oppression and bonding.

Deaf Art expresses the values of Deaf Culture: the beauty of sign language and its painful oppression, the joys of Deaf bonding, communication breakdowns between signers and non-signers, the discovery of language and community, and the history of Deaf people. Deaf Art or, more precisely, Deaf View/Image Art, is a genre that uses formal art elements to express the “innate cultural or physical deaf experience.” Deaf Art is created when the artist intends to express his or her Deaf experience through visual art.

Sign Language is not just a means of communication for Deaf people but a cherished art form in its own right. Paul Johnston and Chuck Baird use images of the hand as important icons in their work. Paul conveys some of the visual lyricism of sign language in his watercolors, *Poetic Hands I and II*. Chuck Baird's *Art No. 2* depicts both the tools of the artist's trade and the sign for “art.” The stark simplicity of Orkid Sassouni's black and white photographs highlights the unrestrained expressiveness of her Deaf subjects in her *Being Deaf and Free Spirit*.

Both Betty G. Miller and Ann Silver give political voices to the history of Deaf people. Betty G. Miller's *American Prohibited*, a pen and ink drawing of manacled, disembodied hands with dismembered fingers, is a scathing commentary on the oppression of sign language. (“Ameslan” is a now-obsolete contraction of “American Sign Language.”) Ann Silver likens the medical and pathological views of Deaf people to boxed and labeled crayons in *Deaf Identity Crayons: Then and Now*. Communication barriers are another linking theme in the

exhibit, expressed by Susan Dupor and Thad Martin. Susan Dupor portrays feelings typical to isolated Deaf children living in non-signing hearing families in *Family Dog*. The faces of other members of the family are blurred, indicating the similarities between lipreading and the experience of viewing a TV program disrupted by static. *Articulatus* by Thad Martin is a composition of heads telling a wordless story of a Deaf experience: from an awakening to one's sense of self, through a struggle for footing in the hearing world, to an affirmation one's wholeness and acceptance of the journey to come.

The Touring Exhibit of Deaf Culture Art is a juried collection of works by 16 American Deaf artists in a variety of styles and media over the period from 1972 to 1999.

Many nuances of the works included in this exhibit may be difficult to discern without knowledge of the issues and perceptions common to members of the Deaf community. This guide is intended to provide information concerning the ways in which each work is relevant to the Deaf culture or experience.

People who are already knowledgeable about Deaf culture may find this guide helpful in obtaining deeper insights into these works. No one, however, should consider the information presented here absolutely definitive: it is, rather, subjective material written on the basis of information obtained from a variety of sources, including the artists, many of whom are directly quoted here. Viewers are encouraged to offer their own thoughts.

Brenda Schertz

the De'VIA Manifesto

DEAF VIEW/IMAGE ART

De'VIA represents Deaf artists and perceptions based on their Deaf experiences. It uses formal art elements with the intention of expressing innate cultural or physical Deaf experience. These experiences may include Deaf metaphors, Deaf perspectives, and Deaf insight in relationship with the environment (both the natural world and Deaf cultural environment), spiritual and everyday life.

De'VIA can be identified by formal elements such as Deaf artists' possible tendency to use contrasting colors and values, intense colors, contrasting textures. It may also most often include a centralized focus, with exaggeration or emphasis on facial features, especially eyes, mouths, ears, and hands. Currently, Deaf artists tend to work in human scale with these exaggerations, and not exaggerate the space around these elements.

There is a difference between Deaf artists and De'VIA. Deaf artists are those who use art in any form, media, or subject matter, and who are held to the same artistic standards as other artists. De'VIA is created when the artist intends to express their Deaf experience through visual art. De'VIA may also be created by deafened or hearing artists, if the intention is to create work that is born of their Deaf experience (a possible example would be a hearing child of Deaf parents). It is clearly possible for Deaf artists not to work in the area of De'VIA.

While applied and decorative arts may also use the qualities of De'VIA (high contrast, centralized focus, exaggeration of specific features), this manifesto is specifically written to cover the traditional fields of visual fine arts (painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, printmaking) as well as alternative media when used as fine arts such as fiber arts, ceramics, neon, and collage.

Created in May, 1989, at The DeafWay.

The signatories were:

Dr. Betty G. Miller, painter; Dr. Paul Johnston, sculptor; Dr. Deborah M. Sonnenstrahl, art historian; Chuck Baird, painter; Guy Wonder, sculptor; Alex Wilhite, painter; Sandi Inches Vasnick, fiber artist; Nancy Creighton, fiber artist; and Lai-Yok Ho, video artist.

Elements of a Culture: Visions by Deaf Artists

artists' biographies and statements

CHUCK BAIRD, B. 1947

Biography

Chuck Baird, who now lives in Arizona, was born deaf in Kansas City, Missouri and has three older deaf sisters. He attended the Kansas School for the Deaf and Gallaudet University, and earned his BFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology. After a few summers with the National Theatre of the Deaf, Chuck worked with them as a full time actor and set designer from 1980 to 1990. Baird's work has been shown in the Deaf Artists' exhibits at the 1975 World Federation of the Deaf Conference in Washington DC; at DeafWay in 1989; at Gallaudet University; and at Deaf Studies conferences in Oakland, Boston, and Chicago. He has been an artist in residence at schools across the country. Chuck has had solo exhibits at the Switzer Gallery in Rochester and at DawnSignPress, San Diego. Baird was the Visual Arts Coordinator at *Spectrum: Focus on Deaf Artists* in Austin and has created commissioned murals for Gallaudet University, The Learning Center for Deaf Children, Framingham, Massachusetts and the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. A DawnSignPress book of his works, *Chuck Baird, 35 Plates* came out in 1993.

Artist's Statement

"Right now, I don't paint for the result, as I used to, but rather for the process. I let it lead me to whatever it will be. I often change the subject matter of a work throughout the process, and the end result depends on the medium, images that suddenly appear in the middle of the process, and so forth.

"The Deaf theme in my work relates to my own experience as a deaf human being; my genre is De'VIA.

"The artist whose technique I currently most admire is Wayne Thiebaud of Davis, California. I wish my painting was as rich as his. I like to use his multicolored rainbow-spectrum technique to affect the delineation of objects and the portrayal of three-dimensional things. My idol, however, is Michael C. McMillen, a miniature artist who is also from California. What I find similar in both our works is a sense of whimsy.

"I no longer paint what people would like to see. I paint for myself. It is about my own experience, my love of ASL and pride in our Deaf heritage. I sometimes create works that have no particular relation to the Deaf."

IRENE BARTOK, B.1965

Biography

Irene Bartok, a resident of New York City, was born in Venice, Italy. She grew up in Paris, where she obtained her degree in Fashion Design from the Private School of Professional Studies. She has also studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. Her participation in recent group exhibitions has included *Works by Deaf Women* at the Ceres Gallery in New York and *20 Deaf Artists: Common Motifs* at the Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland, California. Ms. Bartok recently enrolled in the Rochester Institute of Technology's four-year program in Digital Design and Interactive Media. She wants to combine her photography with graphic arts, and to keep up with today's technology.

Artist's Statement

"The fashion industry changes constantly while nature remains almost the same. When I take pictures, it keeps my world in balance and keeps me in touch with nature. Fashion is illusion; nature is reality. In these pictures, the nature and architecture remain silent and their essence is revealed more powerfully."

UZI BUZGALO, B.1956

Biography

Uzi Buzgalo lives and works in Takoma Park, Maryland as an artist and automobile mechanic and body specialist. He was born deaf in Afula, Israel, and used drawing as a way to communicate with his family and others. Uzi attended the Jerusalem School for the Deaf and at the age of 11 began studying art at the Museum of Israel in Jerusalem. From 1973 to 1975, he studied lithography and sculpture at the Art Museum of Tel-Aviv, then continued his studies at an art residency program, Ein Yod, in Haifa. Buzgalo was a dancer and set designer with a professional dance company, Kol Demama (Sound-Silence) which is internationally known for bringing together Deaf and hearing dancers. Uzi Buzgalo moved to the United States in 1986. He has had solo exhibitions at Gallaudet University, the Model Secondary School for the Deaf, Washington DC and in Antwerp, Lausanne, and Munich. Buzgalo has also participated in group exhibitions at the Deaf Artists' Exhibit at the Deaf Studies Conference at Gallaudet University; the Dell'Arte Gallery, Tel Aviv; and Ein Yod, Haifa, Israel.

Artist's Statement

Uzi's style "induces a comfortable sensation in the viewer despite the political and cultural experiences Deaf people endure in their daily lives. ... There is always the significant point—the contentment of being Deaf. ... The frames embody and encompass the work and its theme. Varying tones are indicated with color and intensity; forceful vibration and hot is red, stable and cool is blue, soft and warm is yellow, and faint or absent is black." The upper portion in

most of his paintings represents a colorful De'VIA (Deaf View Image Art) encoding of the way Deaf people experience life. A central motif in Uzi's work is the waves of colors and dots that flow through a composition, "like Deaf eyes that see in constant motion," and represent a musical element common to both Deaf and hearing people. The use of two components in each work encourages viewers to find connections between them and interpret these in ways they find meaningful.

The neutrality of the human figures allows the viewer to be more receptive to the colors and waves that constantly surround these figures rather than the figures' own physical traits. Dancers are another motif; they follow the waves of color rather than music, reflecting the artist's background in dance and his experiences as being a Deaf dancer. Some themes envision the growth of technology that will make communication between Deaf and hearing people more convenient. Hands are also a prominent motif, portraying the language of the Deaf in daily use. In some paintings, the composition levitates into the open sky, which symbolizes unconditional acceptance of being Deaf. The musical notes innocently tumble down leaving the impression of vividness and vitality of colors in abundant happiness.

Uzi Buzgalo is partial to the works of Spanish artists. He cites Joan Miro and Pablo Picasso as two major influences on his work. "Miro for his continuous black lines and Picasso for great substance and color."

SUSAN DUPOR, B.1969

Biography

Susan Dupor now lives in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin and teaches art at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf. She was born deaf and has a hard of hearing older brother. Susan grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, where she attended "hearing impaired" mainstream programs from kindergarten through twelfth grade. She studied Illustration at the Rochester Institute of Technology and earned her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Ms. Dupor then worked for a year in an animation studio before going on to earn a Masters in Science in Deaf Education and Art Education through a joint program of the University of Rochester and the Rochester Institute of Technology. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at *20 Deaf Artists: Common Motifs* at the Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland, California; *Works by Deaf Women* at the Ceres Gallery in New York; Gallery 2, Chicago, Illinois; the *Deaf Artists' Exhibit* at the Deaf Studies Conference in Boston, Massachusetts; and *A Perspective of Deaf Culture Through Art* in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Her work has also been shown at the Switzer Gallery in Rochester, New York in 1993, 1995 and 1996 and at the Deaf Artists of America Gallery, Rochester, New York.

Artist's Statement

"As an artist who is Deaf, I am constantly exploring my identity as a Deaf woman. I have been painting within this theme for the past ten years and my perspective has changed throughout the years. There were moments when I vented my emotions, and others when I wanted to celebrate the uniqueness of Deaf culture and seek the ironies of being Deaf in a hearing world.

"As a young girl when closed captioning was starting to emerge on prime time public network TV shows, it was Rod Sterling's Twilight Zone TV episodes from the fifties that mesmerized me. Since the program was not closed captioned, my mother would happily interpret some of the shows while I developed an interest in bizarre and twisted stories, which influenced some of my art later in life.

"Frida Kahlo, the late Mexican Surrealist painter, in particular has inspired me because her works of art are figurative, autobiographical and reflect her culture and share the joys and pains of her complicated life.

"The ASL poets that I first saw perform at NTID during my undergraduate years there, Debbie Rennie, Clayton Valli and Peter Cook, made me realize that the D/deaf experience and culture can be incorporated in any art form. They were incredible.

"A lot of energy, inspiration and passion occur during the art making process when I create art related to the D/deaf experience because it is highly relevant and spiritual to me. Other artists, Deaf or non-deaf and from different cultures continue to inspire me to generate art hopefully to inspire and educate others."

PAUL JOHNSTON, B. 1952

Biography

Paul Johnston was born deaf to hearing parents in Los Angeles, California. He attended the California School for the Deaf at Riverside and then the Oregon School for the Deaf. He received his BFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology and his MS and doctorate in art education from Penn State University. Johnston performed with the National Theatre of the Deaf and taught theatre at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York and at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, DC. He is currently an associate professor in Gallaudet University's Art Department. Johnston co-facilitated a workshop at DeafWay that developed the concept and wrote the manifesto of DeafView Image Art. He has conducted workshops, lectures and exhibitions related to the Deaf experience in Visual Arts in Canada, England and the US. His recent solo exhibitions have been at the Shape Gallery, London, England and at Gallaudet University, Washington DC. His works have been in group exhibitions at the Deaf Artists' Exhibits at the Pro Arts Gallery, Oakland,

California; the CIA Headquarters Gallery, Langley, Virginia; the Very Special Arts Gallery, Washington, DC; and at the Gallery of Gallaudet University.

Artist's Statement

"I consider myself a semi-abstract artist. I continuously try to both nurture and share my art by transferring to paper my feelings, my philosophical interpretations of my Deaf experience, and the use of the hand as a tool for both communication and creation. My works are, at times, expressions both of my identity as an American and a Deaf individual living a bicultural experience.

"In creating my Handscapes, I use my insight into imagination, interpretation, perception, perspective and appreciation in an experiment with content and form to construct three-dimensional poems. I am infatuated with the shape and gestures of the hand. The perception of the 'hand instrument' and the 'mask-of-hands' relates the poetic beauty of hands using either sign language or gesture to the expression of mood and emotion on the face or through the voice. Some of my work serves as an analogy: the pleasure that music brings to hearing people is equivalent to the pleasure which beautifully expressed hand signs and gestures bring to Deaf people. As hearing people appreciate the beauty of music, so do Deaf people appreciate and respect the beauty of sign language and the pleasure of the visual arts. My intention is to embrace freedom of expression by inventing new and imaginative icons in each of my works. The image I seek to create the expressive individuality of each hand — pride, beauty and character. I want my works to speak for themselves. I welcome your reaction."

THAD C. MARTIN, B. 1967

Biography

Thad Martin was born in Sacramento, California. He became profoundly deaf after contracting spinal meningitis while in the first grade, and continued his education in hearing schools, where he was the only deaf student. In 1985, when he entered the University of California at Berkeley, Thad discovered the Deaf community for the first time and began learning American Sign Language. He graduated from UC Berkeley with BA degrees in Art and English in 1989, and obtained his MFA degree from the same university in 1992. After teaching art at the University of California at Davis for two quarters in 1994, Thad in 1995 moved to Austin, Texas where he currently lives with his wife and son. His work has been included in the 1995 Deaf Artists of America exhibit at the Switzer Gallery in Rochester; the 1994 and 1995 Annual Ceramic Sculptors Exhibitions at the John Natsoulas Gallery in Davis, California; at Central Sierra Arts Council Gallery in Sonoma, California, and at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, California. He also participated in the Deaf Celebration Art exhibits at the University of California, Berkeley in 1992 and 1994.

Artist's Statement

"Being Deaf, and understanding how the loss of one sense affects the sum of the whole, has had a profound effect on my visions. I live in a silent world, one in which visual imagery becomes paramount. There are things that we experience without the intervention of words or even of thought. The silent knowledge has no linear breakdown; therefore, it does lend itself to verbal articulation. I turn, then, to visual images to express myself.

"I focus on heads alone rather than on bodies or extremities because our heads house our minds, in which our human experiences are firmly rooted, for that is where our perceptions are processed. Our voices rise up through our throats to pour forth from our mouths; our eyes are the windows to our souls. The expressions on our faces mirror our thought and feelings; they are our most direct and unfiltered source of interaction. Our facial expressions are the seat of silent communication.

"For me, spoken language has profound limitations and does not afford me a spontaneous and reciprocal form of communication. Art, however, goes beyond the walls and gulfs of language to relate an experience directly. As an artist, communication is not necessarily my intent, rather, it is a consequence of my work and my unconscious desire for concurrence. It is no more my deliberate attempt to communicate a specific idea than it is to create Deaf art-yet, my work is profoundly Deaf. My art is a consequence of my experience, my experience encompasses being deaf, as a result, my art offers an experience of being Deaf. What I have found is that my work is an affirmation of wholeness and a glimpse into the struggle to find, and the development of a basal primary language, which then becomes a visual manifestation of a wordless tale."

TONY LANDON MCGREGOR, B. 1958

Biography

Tony Landon McGregor lives in Austin, Texas where he is presently Resident Artist-in-Education at the Austin Museum of Art. McGregor became deaf at approximately 18 months of age. He studied drawing and painting in both private and "mainstreamed" public schools. Tony received his BFA with honors and Masters in Education from the University of Texas at Austin, where he is now pursuing a doctorate in multicultural special education with an emphasis on museum education. McGregor has worked as a research assistant, a computer graphics designer, a technical illustrator and an art teacher. He has had solo exhibitions at the Execucom Gallery and the Eagle Nest Gallery, both in Austin. His work has been shown in group exhibitions at *20 Deaf Artists: Common Motifs* at the Pro Arts Gallery, Oakland, California; *Primary Special Arts exhibit Coast to Coast: American Artists* at the Kennedy Center, Washington DC; and Gallaudet University's *Spotlight on Deaf Artists, Part Two*. He won Best of

Show at the High Country Art Festival in Eagle Nest, New Mexico and received honors at the first Annual Texas Gourd Society show. His work has been featured in *DEAFLife*, *Computer Graphics World* and *Texas Monthly*.

Artist's Statement

"I am always involved in many things with my hands; I am constantly experimenting with art. My favorite medium is mixed media. For the last twenty years, I have traveled to West Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah and those areas have greatly influenced my way of thinking. The most prominent artists who influenced me significantly are Georgia O'Keeffe and of course, Francisco de Goya of Spain. In addition, I have been surrounded by Native American friends living in the Southwest area and their culture and folklore are fascinating to me. I have been exploring juxtaposition as a concept in many of my artworks; it contains a unique blending of two cultures; the Native American culture and Deaf culture. This concept creates a new frontier called 'Southwestern De'VIA' art. The works of art I have composed are extensions or dimensions of my artistic personality.

"Sometimes, I create political art to make strong statements about situations or events that somewhat affect me and many of my political satire drawings have been featured in *Deaf Life* magazine. The political satire illustrations are somewhat reminiscent of Goya's style. My political satire art is therapeutic; when I put my "deaf feelings" down on paper or canvas, negative feelings and thoughts are reduced. "Nonetheless, my basic philosophy of art is this: Art should be appreciated for what it is and not by whom it had been done. Art should not be judged as either 'Deaf art' or 'hearing art;' the artist's own style should be respected. Art should be thought of as art for all people. And most important, art galleries should be willing to take in Deaf artists as artists, not as 'deaf' artists."

BETTY G. MILLER, B. 1934

Biography

Betty G. Miller, who lives in Washington, DC, was born hard of hearing to Deaf parents in Chicago, Illinois and attended private oral schools and public schools. She received her BA from Gallaudet University, her MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and her EdD in Art Education from Pennsylvania State University. Miller taught art at Gallaudet University for 18 years before leaving in 1977 to co-found *Spectrum*, *Focus on Deaf Artists*, in Austin, Texas. She has given lectures, workshops and exhibits in the DeafView Image Art genre and she co-facilitated the workshop at DeafWay that developed the concept and wrote the manifesto of DeafView Image Art. Miller has created artworks in neon for the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf, Wilson, North Carolina and for private collections. Her 1972 solo exhibit at Gallaudet, *The Silent World*, was the first art exhibit devoted

to portraying the Deaf experience: Miller has had recent solo exhibitions at the North Harris College Fine Art Gallery, Houston, Texas and at the Thomas Jefferson Center, Charlottesville, Virginia. Her work has been included in almost all known Deaf Artists group exhibitions and was featured in Jack Gannon's 1980 book, *Deaf Heritage*.

Artist's Statement

"Much of my work depicts the Deaf experience expressed in the most appropriate form of communication: visual art. I present both the suppression, and the beauty of Deaf Culture and American Sign Language as I see it; in the past, and in the present. Oppression of Deaf people by hearing is actually cultural, educational, and political. I hope this work, and the understanding that may arise from this visual expression, will help bridge the gap between the Deaf world, and the hearing world."

JOAN POPOVICH-KUTSCHER, B. 1951

Biography

Joan Popovich-Kutscher lives and works as an artist and teacher in Pomona, California. Born in Los Angeles, at the age of three and a half she was misdiagnosed as moderately mentally retarded and placed in a state hospital for the developmentally disabled. At the age of eight she enrolled at the California School for the Deaf in Riverside. She received her BFA in Printmaking from the California Institute of Arts, Valencia and a MFA in Printmaking from California State University, Fullerton. Popovich-Kutscher has received grants from the California Art Council for Artist in Residence programs. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at *20 Deaf Artists: Common Motifs* at the Pro Arts Gallery, Oakland, California; the Kellogg University Art Gallery at the California State Polytechnic University in Pomona; the Stockton National Print and Drawing Exhibition, Stockton; Mini Print International Exhibitions in Binghamton, New York; the Hartwick College Museum, Oneonta, New York; the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery, Cedar City, Utah; Brand Library Gallery, Glendale, California; and the Salon de le Petit Gallery 825, Los Angeles. Her work has also been exhibited abroad in Girona and Barcelona, Spain, Joensuu, Finland, Wingfield, England and Bages, France.

Artist's Statement

"The strong imagery in my art is based upon my personal history and through working as a symbolist. The personal symbols used in my prints are related to my past feelings of frustration. I try to show my expression by way of art, which is my favorite way of communicating my thoughts and feelings.

"I discovered some appropriate symbols which formed the sharp, lively imagery. The hard image of rope pulling the graphic symbols, bearing different degrees of sharpness,

communicates the intense pains in my life. I try to express the bright lines of the images and the active flowing rope.

"I do printmaking by etching and lithograph on handmade paper because the personal experience matched the emotion of being trapped in a mental hospital which was a dirty old building."

"My prints have become abstract three-dimensional sculptures because of their power to convey my past frustrations. The emerging images communicate my feeling of freedom that came with my move away from the state hospital."

ORKID SASSOUNI, B. 1971

Biography

Orkid Sassouni was born in Tehran, Iran, and was found to be deaf at age three. When Iran's Islamic Revolution began in 1979, her entire family left Iran and settled in Long Island, NY. Orkid was enrolled in a regular public school and received daily speech therapy until she graduated from high school. She thought she was "the only Deaf person in the whole wide world" until she saw "DEAF PRESIDENT NOW!" (the student-led revolution at Gallaudet University) on television. Orkid then attended Gallaudet, graduating in May 1995 with a degree in Art History and Museum Studies. While at Gallaudet she also took photography courses, and later took advanced photography courses with a 4 by 5 Sinar Bron camera at the Parsons School of Design and worked as an archival intern in Annie Leibovitz's studio. She has worked as a Gallery Lecturer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and is currently pursuing a Masters of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts at San Francisco State University. She has participated in the group shows *Works by Deaf Women* at the Ceres Gallery in New York and *20 Deaf Artists: Common Motifs* at the Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland, California.

Artist's Statement

"I have been photographing and still continuing my on-going project of and about Deaf and hard of hearing individuals for more than two years. I traveled great distances around both the east coast and the west coast to get inspiration for my photography project.

"What made me start doing this project in the first place? I got advice from Annie Leibovitz, a well-known photographer who suggested that I photograph my family and Deaf friends. I tried both to see how much I could capture. Slowly, I started photographing more and more Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. But soon my idea changed to more of a fine art of sign language and their life within me. (My original purpose was to show sign language. However, this later changed to capturing the art of sign language and having Deaf people being themselves in front of my camera.)

"I became fascinated with their pride, their energy, their most important tools in communication, their thoughts, and their self-conscious of the world outside. Today, I continue with my photography project about 'Being Deaf and Free-Spirits.'"

ANN SILVER, B. 1949

Biography

Ann Silver is a graphic designer and illustrator. Born Deaf in a hearing family in Seattle, she attended public schools. Her BA and MA degrees came from Gallaudet University and New York University, respectively. Silver is one of the founding members of the Washington DC-based Deaf Art Movement of the 1960s-70s. In New York City, she was a designer and art director for major book publishers. In addition to working with the Museum of Modern Art to establish a museum consortium accessibility program for Deaf visitors, Silver was a museum docent for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1986, Silver received a Japan-United States Friendship Commission Fellowship to pioneer Japanese Deaf Studies. Her artwork has been exhibited in several Deaf Studies and ASL Literature National Conference Art Shows in Chicago, Boston, Rochester, Washington DC and Oakland. Moreover, her "Deafcore" work has been seen in group shows here and abroad—including *Art & Soul International Art Exhibition*, Los Angeles; *Vision Through Deaf Eyes* at the CIA Headquarters, Langley, Virginia; the *AT&T Art Exhibit* at US West, Seattle; the Grey Art Gallery at New York University; Stockholm and Tokyo. Now residing in Seattle, Silver engages in legal/policy analysis from a Deafcentric perspective and continues to create art.

Artist's Statement

"Rumors of my scribbling artwork on the walls inside of my mother's womb could not be confirmed. Born genetically Deaf, I was blessed with art as a native language—or it enabled me to communicate with the hearing folk long before I acquired other languages, namely English and American Sign Language [ASL]. Does that make me trilingual?"

"My language of art has, over the years, metamorphosed from pictorial grammar to creativity and critical thinking. I turn to art (1) as an artistic expression of the Deaf Experience—i.e., culture, language, identity and heritage; (2) as a Zen meditation and an aesthetic recreation of the contemplative state in which it allows my thoughts to drift by without grasping at them; (3) as an emergency back-up whenever the English language gives me semantic anxiety; (4) as an academic study vis-à-vis Deaf Studies; and (5) as a visual weapon to deal with polemical issues and concerns such as stereotyping, inaccessibility, paternalism, inequality and discrimination on the basis of hearing status (a.k.a. audism).

"No matter how you look at it—protest art, political satire, victim art or graphic wit, I do not shy away from ethical

questions or controversy. Having fused scholarship, creativity and sociopolitical philosophy, I truly believe that my being Deaf-with-a-capital-D gives me a greater visual acuity which in turn affects my work, artistic and otherwise. Deaf Art is my soul, my heart, my conscience."
Biography and Statement copyright © 1999, Ann Silver

MARJORIE STOUT, B. 1959

Biography

Marjorie Stout resides in Sheffield, Massachusetts and works in the field of human services. She was born hearing in Washington, DC and for unknown reasons gradually became deaf while still in grammar school. Her deafness has been progressive, and her father is also deaf. Stout attended mainstream schools throughout her education. She discovered photography in high school at about the same time that she finally accepted her deafness. She earned her BFA from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and incorporated photographs in her paintings for her senior thesis. Stout's work has been included in group exhibitions at DeafWay; and in Deaf Artists' Exhibits at Deaf Studies Conferences in Boston, Massachusetts, and in Washington, DC. Her work has also been shown in group exhibitions at *Uncommon Senses* at the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center; in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the Museum of Fine Arts in Springfield, Massachusetts, and the Herter Gallery at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Artist's Statement

"I firmly believe that art is a 'felt' process, and how one 'hears' affects how one 'sees.' During my studies at UMass, I worked on understanding my senses and developing my skills in art in conveying them and my feelings towards them, how my deafness has affected my both sensory and environmental. Through my art I have found a way to communicate universally. While my paintings and photographs reflect my own experience of deafness, I cannot claim that they are everyone's experience. Perhaps some people can identify with my paintings, while others may learn from them. It is my goal and hope that regardless of their being understood by deaf or hearing, or anyone, that they provide pleasure and enjoyment to some, if not all, people."

ROBIN TAYLOR, B. 1952

Biography

Robin Taylor lives and works in New York. While quite young, years of chronic ear infections and numerous surgeries led to her begin given experimental medication to alleviate Scar Tissue Damage. Eighteen months later she had regained most of her hearing but developed a pronounced stutter. Robin holds a BFA from the United States International University School of Performing Arts in San Diego and an MFA from UCLA. She taught Movement for Actors at

Pepperdine University in Malibu, California during the late 1970s. After surgery for tumor removal, Robin's hearing was impaired. In the 1990's she began to retreat from the theater and found an outlet for her creative expression in sculpture. She has participated in group shows at *Millennial Fever - Cutting Edge Art of the Future*, at the Hudson Guild Gallery, New York; *20 Deaf Artists: Common Motifs* at the Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland, California; *Works by Deaf Women* at the Ceres Gallery, New York; at the Renee Foosaner Gallery, Millburn, New Jersey; and the Henry Litwin Gallery in Wichita, Kansas. She has created a commissioned outdoor sculpture in Wales, United Kingdom and is represented by the Tilting at Windmills Gallery, Manchester Center, Vermont.

Artist's Statement

"The philosophy behind my sculpture comes from a very private place. Many of my works deal with the emotional frustration of being between two language worlds and I use my past history, medical events and daily life experiences to create them.

"My name is Robin Taylor and I'm a Hard of Hearing Artist. With my hands I connect my voice to these two worlds and tell my story. Maybe yours is a part of them too."

SANDI INCHES VASNICK, B. 1951

Biography

Sandi Inches Vasnick first lived in Coraopolis, a small town some 30 miles from Pittsburgh, with a deaf brother, two deaf sisters and a hearing sister. The youngest child of the family, Sandi began using sign language practically from birth. She graduated from the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and completed her fine arts training at Gallaudet. She then became a layout artist with *Spectrum: Focus on Deaf Artists*, where she was a founding member of the American Deaf Dance Company. In 1979 she joined the National Theatre of the Deaf and remained with them as an actress for more than 14 years. She subsequently earned her MS in Art Education through a joint program at the University of Rochester and Rochester Institute of Technology. Vasnick's work was included in the group exhibition, *A Perspective of Deaf Culture Through Art* in Haverhill, Massachusetts in 1993. She currently teaches art and does drama coaching at the Phoenix Day School for the Deaf in Phoenix, Arizona.

Artist's Statement

"My art work is related to the world of visual communication through themes both personal and evocative.

"Most of my works stress and enlarge the hands and the eyes, and de-emphasize the mouth and the ears—except when hands emerge from these organs. In the case of animals and mythical figures, I depict silent creatures that relate to us through their eyes as powerful indicators of needs and feelings. Color, a sine qua non of art, is the most

difficult component of the work to capture. Color holds the power to enhance the mood and meaning of each composition. In art, the Deaf artist can soar as high as desired even in an atmosphere of silence."

ALEX WILHITE, B. 1960

Biography

Alex Wilhite, born deaf, was educated at the Central Institute for the Deaf in St. Louis, Missouri, and the American School in Kuwait. After attending the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and, briefly, Gallaudet, he received his BFA from the University of North Alabama and his MFA from the Pratt Institute, New York. He now teaches art at the Enrichment Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He has had solo exhibitions at the Alo Gallery, Coral Gables, Florida; the Nein Gallery, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; the Montgomery Armory Gallery in Montgomery, Alabama; and the Deaf Artists of America Gallery in Rochester, New York. Wilhite's work has been exhibited at *Vision Through Deaf Eyes* at CIA Headquarters, Langley, Virginia; the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California; the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio; the Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama; and, with works by Jackson Pollock, at The Ueno Royal Museum in Tokyo, Japan. Recently honored at a White House reception in connection with *Experience the Power: Art and Disability in America*, Wilhite's work has been on the cover of the National Endowment for the Arts' *Design for Accessibility: an Arts Administrators Guide* and the back cover of the magazine *DEAFLife*.

Artist's Statement

"My years of experience in traveling throughout the world guide my inspiration about the value of color, which changes every hour in every day. My perception of color is the value of the three primary colors changing into varieties of colors. High or strong colors define outlines; strong contrast is involved into my own style of painting, which influences me to follow the value of nature's colors to change from sunrise to sunset. I use those colors to combine with black, white or grays. I try to develop two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms. I still research and experiment in abstract illusionism. I am deeply interested in combining hard-edge paintings into action, which flows into optical colors. Gradation represents my form of Neo-Platonism.

"My emphasis is on analysis of art as idealism or illusionism, which may be subdivided into Neo-Platonism as philosophies postulating an ideal element in all paintings or drawings. I favor a form of illusionism with reality dependent upon a relationship with my mind. It is my desire to create idealism of illusionism as my subject. It contributes to the hypothesis that only spirits and experience are my inspiration, which develop the creative ideas of my art work. The idealism and illusionism in modern philosophies were developed chiefly by

Greek, Italian, German, English, Japanese, Chinese and American philosophers who have influenced my life. Right now I am practicing Zen which provides the aesthetics and affability my paintings and drawings reflect."

HARRY R. WILLIAMS, 1948-1991

Biography

Harry R. Williams, who became deaf in infancy, was one of three deaf and two hearing children born to hearing parents in Columbus, Ohio. He attended the California School for the Deaf at Riverside and received his BA in Art from Gallaudet University. Williams was one of the founders of the Deaf Art Movement based in Washington DC. In 1981 Williams and his Deaf brother were featured in the documentary *Profile of a Deaf Artist & Deaf Mechanic*, from Los Angeles's KCET-TV. At Harry R. Williams' only solo exhibit, at the International Deaf Cultural Arts Academy in Stockholm, Sweden in 1990 every single one of the works he displayed was sold. Williams' work has been included in exhibitions at Gallaudet University; the Newport Beach Art Festival; and the Deaf Artists' Exhibit at the Deaf Studies Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, and is featured in collections at Gallaudet University; Newport Beach City Hall; the California School for the Deaf, Riverside; and many private collections. His work was on the covers of the publication of the First International Ecumenical Seminar on the Pastoral Care of the Deaf and the DawnSignPress book *A Journey into the Deaf World*. Harry R. Williams is the subject of a book soon to be published by DawnSignPress.

Artist's Statement

"Art is our music!"

list of artworks

CHUCK BAIRD

Art No. 2, 1994

This is the second in the "Art" series; the first is on the cover of his book "Chuck Baird, 35 Plates." "Art is my whole life. The radiance behind the sign 'art', represents the radiance of Hope. The flying objects represent the various mediums in which I work." In the first painting, the sign is seen from the viewpoint of the signer/artist, while in the present work, it is seen from the viewpoint of the receptor/viewer. This work, which was selected for the exhibit poster, was created especially for Jaime Harter, a young Deaf girl living near Kansas City, MO.

Crocodile Dundee, 1992

As if reflected in a mirror, a pair of arms lies directly beneath a crocodile's huge, fearsome jaws, in parody of their gaping motion. "In my whimsical world, if the magical Australian wildlife guide, Crocodile Dundee, was Deaf, he would play tricks on visitors, appearing underwater below the crocodile's jaws and altering its reflection on the surface of the water." The muscularity of the hands and arms reflect the strength of the crocodile's jaws.

Heart, 1999

"This work incorporates one of my own chest x-rays, mounted on a light-box with pieces of carved and painted wood forming a heart shape and a pair of hands making the sign for "heart." Incorporating sign language in his paintings is a Chuck Baird trademark. People who know Chuck Baird quickly recognize his distinctive hands in this work.

Please But, 1999

This three dimensional wooden carving is constructed so that the train crossing gate can be moved. The gates are in the extended-index-finger hand shape used to denote the number one. The work was inspired by a classic Deaf joke: a Deaf person who has waited a long time at a closed railroad crossing but can see no trains coming approaches the crossing attendant to ask him to open the gate. Unsure of his command of English, he first signs to himself how he should make the request, and then writes it as an ASL gloss: "PLEASE BUT."

IRENE BARTOK

Divine Power, 1996

"I took this picture of a carved stone door knocker in the shape of a hand near Lake Major in northern Italy. It influenced the way I see things in my life. It made me look back on my childhood: I was born deaf and as a child, I had a very frustrating period growing up. This stone door knocker, set against a stone door, has connotations of 'Eternity.' The hand

also represents our language, and it is ironic that this hand-shaped door knocker is set in stone, which calls to mind the phrase 'stone-deaf.'"

UZI BUZGALO

Color in Wind, 1997

Buzgalo's attempts to internalize music are reflected in the musical notes in this work. *Color in Wind* represents the artist's experience, when he was young, watching clothes drying on a line with the wind gently blowing them to and fro. Their movements created colorful patterns and schema that the artist thought very similar to music. The upper part of the painting brings the viewer to imagine music with waves of colors and shapes in place of music notes. "There is always the significant point—the contentment of being Deaf."

Hard Move, 1999

Yellow hands in the painting appear to prevent the woman from getting through, a metaphor for the fact that some hearing people who are ignorant of Deaf people's language or communication needs become barriers to moving ahead. For Deaf people, paradise would be a place where they could communicate with hearing people who know about Deaf people and sign language, without any of the barriers shown in the smaller scene at the top of the work.

I Want to Ride, 1997

A Deaf child reaches out as an indication of his desire to embrace signed language and culture, which are symbolized by the carousel. This is a message to professionals whose belief that instruction and communication strictly by auditory means often deprives the child of language acquisition and a healthy cultural interface. The child appears to be drowning in a pool of water; a metaphor for all the times information goes right over his head. The triangle depicts the child, his parents, and the pathology that are bound into a cycle of oppression.

In the Light, 1997

The figure stepping into the light represents the enlightenment of the moment when a Deaf person acquires sign language, especially if, as frequently happens, the person had spent early childhood without a formal language. In the upper portion, a single sheet of paper is splitting into two, one imprinted with musical notes and the other with waves of colors and dots, as if to say there are two sides to language: the auditory and the visual.

Long Night, 1977

Light-hearted reflections on the differences between the hearing and Deaf cultures are the subjects of this work. Two Deaf people engaged in deep conversation in a well-lighted area accidentally knock over a glass, a fairly typical experience for Deaf people. In the background, hearing persons

converse unhindered by such things as darkness or flower vases blocking their view of each other. The upper portion of the composition gives a musical and visual interpretation of the event in dots.

SUSAN DUPOR

Delavan, Wisconsin, 1891, 1999

"This is a homage to deaf children who attended the Wisconsin School for the Deaf before the 1900s." The photos on the upper right of each painting of the diptych are paintings of circus animals, one of a lion and the other of a seal. This recalls the time when teachers of the deaf would place selected deaf children on display as a form of educational entertainment, having them make presentations. The facial expressions of the children shown here express discomfort. The "D" and "W" handshapes represent Delavan, Wisconsin, the location of the Wisconsin School for the Deaf.

Family Dog, 1991

This work is expressive of feelings typical to isolated Deaf children living in non-Signing hearing families. The faces of the other members of the family are blurred, likening the experience of lipreading to the experience of viewing a TV program disrupted by static. The Deaf child, who wears hearing aids, is likened to a family pet that is patted on the head while being told "Good girl, good girl."

I Interesting Hamster, 1993

The juxtaposition of the hamsters and the deaf students is a metaphor of the experience of the "caged" environment of mainstreamed deaf students' self-contained classrooms. The work is critical of education of the deaf, in part because the artist believes that the term "Hearing Impaired" as used in mainstreamed schools is a label indicating a pathological disorder. Deaf students' audiological and speech development are of paramount importance in mainstreamed education, as is indicated in the students' lack of individual faces. The flowers in the background, although not the varieties normally seen at funerals, are symbolic of death.

Narcissus, 1999

"An adolescent girl signs 'I Love You' to herself. The mirror image is symbolic of Narcissus, who in Greek mythology falls in love with himself upon seeing his reflection in a pool of water and is subsequently turned into a flower." To be narcissistic is generally looked down upon, but to love oneself as a Deaf person is not.

Narcissus and Swallows, 1999

"A continued painting exploration of the original painting, *Narcissus*." Artists often create multiple works of a single theme or image. Some make several versions of the same subject, as for example Claude Monet did with his water lilies. The two *Narcissus* paintings represent an experiment with colors and composition.

Pussy, 1994

"Men in many cultures use language - Sign language included - to degrade women, who they perceive as merely sex objects." This painting is oddly shaped, suggestive of female body parts. The male signers are describing sexual acts.

PAUL JOHNSTON

Energy of Language, 1998

The painting is an imaginary visual analysis of the ways hearing and Deaf people develop language, represented as mechanical workings.

Poetic Hand I, 1998

Poetic Hand II, 1998

"In creating my Handscapes, I use my insight into imagination, interpretation, perception, perspective and appreciation in an experiment with content and form to construct three-dimensional poems. I am infatuated with the shape and gestures of the hand. Some of my work serves as an analogy: the pleasure that music brings to hearing people is equivalent to the pleasure which beautifully expressed hand signs and gestures bring to Deaf people."

Theory of Language, 1998

The central striped and boxed image is a colorful representation of one theory of how a Deaf person thinks and visualizes in his/her mind when processing language. Elements in expressing language are all "hooked up" together.

Unity of Communication, 1998

A classic example of DeafView/Image Art, this work includes such motifs as the exaggeration of eyes and fingers and in the use of contrasting colors. Connecting strands and striped banners through some motifs lend a sense of celebration to the whole. The viewer can also sense the presence of a community or collaboration among the components.

THAD C. MARTIN

Articulatus (Read My Lips), 1994

A composition of heads, the elements of this work are named after primal sounds. The relationships among them tell a wordless story of a deaf person's experience: from an awakening to a sense of self, through a struggle for footing in the hearing world, to an affirmation of one's wholeness and an acceptance of the journey to come.

"Taken as a whole, they tell a tale: it begins with the head "ooo..." representing the point of embarkation with complete and serene acceptance of one's deafness, showing enthusiasm and anticipation with none of the negative connotations imposed by society. The next head, "ahh..." represents a Deaf person in the greater world, whose

struggles in that world are neither heard nor comprehended. The next four heads, "err...", "ege...", "mmm..." and "uhh..." tell, respectively, of the retreat into oneself in the face of the inherent limitations to the Deaf in the hearing world, of the realization that one is facing a problem, and looking for an answer; of coming into awareness that there is nothing wrong with oneself, that the problem is out there and one is whole, and of a brave but perturbed outlook on the journey ahead."

There is a grouping within the work in which the shorter heads, "ahh...", "err...", and "uhh..." represent a person's outward workings, and the taller heads, "ooo...", "ege..." and "mmm..." represent a person's inward workings. There are three mutual pairings between these groups, "ahh..." with "ooo...", "err..." with "ege...", "uhh..." with "mmm..." Each pairing is dynamic and reciprocal, reflecting an outward manifestation of an inward state of mind and vice versa. Further, in the naming of each individual head, the title morpheme was chosen as a metaphor for the inward experience or affliction each head displays.

"Aah..." head out in the clouds, the soul awakened in the body to breathe the thick air, the struggle to bring forth what lies inside, to speak one's word, yet nothing comes forth; the ears of society are deaf to wordless language.

"Ooo..." pleasant and uplifted, dreaming in clam and delicious anticipation with unspoiled naiveté about the remembered possibilities of the journey to come, ethereal, tuning to the wafts of a delicious strain.

"Err..." a head that realizes it can't spontaneously communicate, that the larger world is a hard place, and less than accepting of those who do not conform. The inward reaction to a deaf person's experience in face of the hearing world.

"Ege..." an opening of eyes-something is not working. Patience borne of long struggle. Looking to the horizon, having a long ways to go acceptance of reality and ready to move on, seeking an answer.

"Uhh..." finally, the beginning, he goes forth into the world, struggles intact. He has a lot to say, and he is worried because nothing is for certain. But he is going forth, his eyes are open and he looks to the heavens for help. He knows it's up to him to make a go of it.

"Mmm..." a realization that the problem is not within oneself, that the dreams are not forgotten, one can leave stress behind, the inner world is beautiful and there is peace here and now at every moment.

TONY LANDON MCGREGOR

Southwestern Fishes, 1999

"Classic southwestern images from several Indian cultures adorn this large, hollow vase-shaped woodburned gourd bowl. An imaginative juxtaposition of two cultures, Deaf and Southwestern Pueblo Indian, creates a new frontier in De'VIA art; the whole fingerspelled sign for "fish" is blended spirally with a variety of stylized ancient Southwestern Indian tribe fish images."

Three Southwestern Signs, 1999

"Twenty-six alphabet signs blended with three ASL signs (butterfly, fish and bird) and classic southwestern images dominate the whole woodburned giant gourd bowl. An inlaid 'sleeping beauty' turquoise-eyed water serpent weaves around the top part of the gourd bowl."

BETTY G. MILLER

Ameslan Prohibited, 1972

This drawing, depicting a pair of manacled, disembodied hands with the fingers dismembered, was one of the works included in Dr. Miller's historic 1972 one-woman exhibit, which was the first to focus on portraying the Deaf experience. The work represents the prohibitions placed on the use of sign language at many schools for the deaf.

("Ameslan" is a now-obsolete contraction of "American Sign Language," which we now term "ASL"). This piece, like *Bell School* (see below), exemplifies Betty G. Miller's early work.

Bell School, 1944, 1972

"This painting portrays a group of Deaf and hard of hearing children with almost no eyes as pupils of an oral school for the Deaf, indicating that the emphasis of this school was on speech, hearing aids and lipreading. The large hands indicate a desire to use forbidden sign language, hands left unused like the eyes." The lettering on the background represents sounds that Deaf children are forced to say repetitively in speech training, and the children's jaws are formed like those of puppets, indicating ironically their role in the learning process.

JOAN POPOVICH-KUTSCHER

Confusion of Mood, 1999

"The three points of the triangle represent my parents, the state hospital and the California School for the Deaf in Riverside. When I finally went to the school for the Deaf I had to learn social skills and rules of behavior." Within the triangle can be seen a set of three matched figures that appear to be chains, a symbol of oppression.

Effect Point, 1993

"Sharp points on the two shapes in the work represent the sharp lessons in order to lead a 'right' way of life despite my frustrations with education. The red cross represents my life as a teacher/professor as 'right.' In the small checkered box of yellow and black squares, the black represents life as a hell, and the yellow represents the good life as an artist." The sharp points in her work eloquently express pain in her life.

Final Out Only Deaf, 1989

"When I was seven and a half, they took me from the state hospital to UCLA to evaluate my IQ and hearing. They came to the conclusion that I was just deaf not mentally retarded." A small triangle in this work represents three major factors in Popovich-Kutscher's life: her parents, the hospital and the school for the deaf. Rope is notable among the several recurrent symbols in her works; it represents the oppression of having her hands tied down, leaving her unable to communicate. Her feelings are expressed through tight compositions of symbols.

Point Lose Class, 1994

"I was frustrated with the learning process. I was not interested in class work (hence the title: I lost points) because I never received any education while I was at the state hospital but I was very interested in art. Later in my life I appreciated the value of education and pursued a college education."

Point on Art, 1999

"Mrs. Fauth, a teacher at the school for the Deaf, drew pictures in order to explain that I had improper grooming habits or unacceptable behavior. She would draw me with messy hair and neat hair; and draw an angry face and then a face with a smile. I finally understood what she tried to communicate to me." The title indicates that the teacher made her point through art, using visual symbols as a means to communicate with a person who had not yet acquired a formal language.

Symbols in Art, 1999

"I struggled with my moods at the school for the Deaf because I was not well liked in school. I spent most of my time drawing in my room. Black circles or holes shows how I felt when people did not believe I had earned my Masters in Fine Arts."

ORKID SASSOUNI

Being Deaf and Free Spirit, 1998-99

A series of black and white photographs are put together in a book showing the kinship and closeness in the Deaf community. One can sense a "Deaf family" in the photographer's attempts to capture Deaf people at their

naturally expressive moments in her search to show "the fine art of sign language and their life within me."

ANN SILVER

Deaf & Dumb 1903/Deaf 1993 (License Plates Series), 1993
"In the last few decades, there have been continued efforts to heighten a sense of cultural identity and group identification among Americans. There has been greater recognition of the fact that an individual's sense of identity is very significantly tied to his or her sense of ethnic culture. Yet societal/institutional audism (prejudice against Deaf culture) has made acceptance of ethnicity as a model for Deaf people elusive. Because pathological/medical viewpoints have successfully prevented us from being classed as a true linguistic-cultural minority, negative labels are still imbedded in our language and our literature."

Deaf Identity Crayons: Then & Now (Crayon Box Series), 1999
This work places the changing status of Deaf people in the context of the evolution of the dominant culture. "The SEEING crayon is a tribute to the late John Darcy Smith, one of the proponents of the Deaf Art Movement. During the Sixties, he waged an unsuccessful word-conversion campaign at a time when political correctness had not become fashionable. His reasoning was that if humans who depend on sound are called 'hearing' people; others who rely on sight should likewise be labeled 'seeing' rather than 'hearing-impaired.'"

Hearing-Impaired: Wrong Way/Deaf: Right Way (Road Sign Series), 1992
"Society still lacks major signposts leading to ASL/Deaf culture. Solution? Street, parking, directional and warning signs. I use them as an intermediary not only to grab viewers' attention but also to remove age-old mislabels and misconceptions molded by educational and vocational rehabilitation systems and other means through which the general public receives information about Deaf people. If my work can shape critical thinking in ways that statistical reports, legal action and institutions cannot, then I have accomplished something."

Kellogg's Deaf Studies; Not Pathology (Food for Thought Series), 1996
"Modern art meets popular culture. ... "The breakfast cereal box is more than just food; it is a metaphor for packaging in everyday life and a form of entertainment. My satirical work is an intersection of two cultures and languages; hearing and Deaf—as well as English and American Sign Language (ASL). "As long as ASL and Deaf Studies are not on an academic par with other cultural, ethnic, gender and disability studies in colleges and universities around the country, we remain Deaf Under-Studies."

Will the Real Goya Please Stand Up? (Food for Thought Series), 1996
"Was there such a thing as a d/Deaf identity in Francisco [de] Goya's heyday? Were the legendary Spaniard alive today, just how would Goya feel if he were regarded as a 'late-deafened artist'? And would he classify his work as 'Deaf Art?'"

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MARJORIE STOUT

Black and White: Deafness With Noise, 1990
"The shapes and images in this piece would define the tone and silences ringing in my ears. The "blacks" really are colors of red, blue and green tones to appear as black. They make the blacks appear to be very deep, reminiscent of the deep flat tones I hear. The white shapes are a sharper image and they illustrate the very high pitches that also occur in my ears. Some float and linger, others are static. Some are strong and some are smaller but high pitching presence."

Sound, 1990
"The word 'SOUND' is stenciled in so closely in color that it is easily overlooked. Once again, this is the same experience I have with deafness: I may or may not be able to hear a sound but it is very borderline, and usually missed. The strong white line shooting up in the center is the equivalent of a sharp blast of high pitched sound that I sometimes get, in the midst of a vast deep space of constant flat tones and pitches."

ROBIN TAYLOR

Avenue of Loss, 1998
"Avenue of Loss deals with (depending on your point of view) a hearing mother trying to communicate with her Deaf little girl who is following the river of her heart (the doll), chasing the doll and leaving the oral world and continuing on her own road. And the mother's own hand turns to stiff wood (because she uses no ASL - American Sign Language - and has no language skills to communicate) and all she can think is that her child is headed down the drain and lost forever. That's why I named it 'Avenue of Loss' - no communication!"

SANDI INCHES VASNICK

Silence, 1989
"I had deaf siblings and felt so free to communicate with my hands and use facial expressions and body movement. This was during the time sign language was forbidden in the classrooms. I felt that I was hungry for knowledge about life that full expression in signing was needed. Oralism meant 'no real learning' for me." This frustration not being able to

express oneself is indicated by the absence of mouths. The folded hands were a technique to keep students from signing.

ALEX WILHITE

Camera, 1999

"When I travel to the third world to explore new cultures these expeditions are culture shocks for me." Wilhite states that Hearing people often experience the same sense of culture shock when they meet Deaf people. Because of this – and possibly because of fear of being "contaminated" by people they perceive as disabled, they avoid Deaf people.

Kiln, 1999

"When people try to make me feel inferior, I feel as if I am in an inferno - a kiln. I learn to ignore things around me. The heat of the kiln cleanses out my feelings. There is a lot of noise pollution in the real world that may cause people to lose their hearing, after which they may feel like they are in the 'Kiln.'" The artist's use of the word "inferno" may be a play on its dual meaning: hell or a very hot fire.

Red Sea, 1999

"When I travel by sea I [am] isolated from the hearing world and communication barriers. I seek to connect with others to try to overcome communication barriers." A lone shape floats in a pool of blue surrounded by the color red, symbolizing a communication barrier, but the barrier appears to be dissolving in the lower right corner, giving the work a hopeful note.

Spaced of Wings, 1998

Waterstream II, 1997

The abstract "winged" object in *Spaced of Wings* appears to fly towards a barrier-free fantasy world, while the red figure in *Waterstream II* may represent the temptation to escape from communication difficulties. The artist makes use of mingled green and yellow to represent sea or sky, and the figures seem to move away from the negative energy of the color red and towards the more positive purple at the opposite ends of the works. The artist's architectural background has strongly influenced these images.

HARRY R. WILLIAMS

A Violin Becomes an Artist, 1983

The violin is a frequent symbol in Williams' work, and in this piece consists partly of a piece of carved wood forming the violin's neck that merges smoothly into the violin in the painting. The absence of strings in the violin and the cut off stem of the calla lily were Williams' symbols of deafness. Fragments of the artist's name can be seen at the top of the music score sheet, as if to say he considered himself a composer of visual music.² The chicken wire on the background may represent communication barriers.

checklist

List of artworks

Chuck Baird

Heart, 1999, mixed media, 14x17

Please But, 1999, wood, 11x36x24

(courtesy of Susan Rutherford)

Art No. 2, 1994, acrylic, 24x30 (courtesy of Jaime Harter)

Crocodile Dundee, 1992, acrylic, 24x30

(courtesy of DawnSignPress)

Irene Bartok

Divine Power, 1996, photograph, 18x20

Uzi Buzaglo

Color in Wind, 1997, acrylic on paper, 30x35

In the Light, 1997, acrylic on paper, 30x40

Long Night, 1997, acrylic on paper, 29x36

I Want to Ride, 1997, acrylic on paper, 33x38

(courtesy of Steve and Nancy Bock and family)

Hard Move, 1999, acrylic on paper, 32x 39

Susan Dupor

Narcissus and Swallows, 1999, oil on masonite, 32x21

Delavan, Wisconsin, 1891, 1999, oil on masonite, 13x9.25
diptych (courtesy of Dennis and Dorene Tully)

Narcissus, 1999, oil on masonite, 27x19

Pussy, 1994, oil on masonite, 30x13

I interesting hamster, 1993, oil on masonite, 49x49.5

Family Dog, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 56x57

Paul Johnston

Poetic Hand I, 1998, watercolor, 22x29

(courtesy of Clayton Valli)

Poetic Hand II, 1998, watercolor, 22x29

(courtesy of Betty G. Miller)

Unity of Communication, 1998, watercolor, 34x26

Energy of Language, 1998, watercolor, 26x34

Theory of Language, 1998, watercolor, 26x34

Thad C. Martin

Articulatus (Read My Lips), 1994, ceramic, 34x78x48

From left to right, "ooo," "aah," "em," "ege," "mmm," and "uhh"

Tony McGregor

Southwestern Fishes, 1999, wood-burned gourd, 9x12.5

(courtesy of Steve and Nancy Bock and family)

Three Southwestern Signs, 1999, wood-burned gourd,

18x12.5 (courtesy of Steve and Nancy Bock and family)

Betty G. Miller

Bell School, 1944, 1972, oil/mixed media, 36x36

(courtesy of Tom Humphries)

Ameslan Prohibited, 1972, ink on paper, 23x15

(courtesy of Sandi Inches Vasnick)

acknowledgments

Joan Popovich-Kutscher

- Confusion of Mood, 1999, etching/aquarelle on handmade paper, 10x10
Point on Art, 1999, etching/aquarelle on handmade paper, 10x10
Symbols in Art, 1999, etching/aquarelle on handmade paper, 13x13
Point Lose Class, 1994 etching/aquarelle on handmade paper, 7x7
Final Out only Deaf, 1989, etching/aquarelle on handmade paper, 15x17
Effect Point, 1993 etching/aquarelle on handmade paper, 7x7

Orkid Sassouni

- Being Deaf and Free Spirit, 1998-99, book of photographs, 3.5x4.5 photos in 14.5 x 8 book

Ann Silver

- Deaf Identity Crayons: Then and Now, 1999, mixed media, 20x16
Kellogg's Deaf Studies, Not Pathology, 1996, mixed media, 16x20
Will The Real Goya Please Stand Up?, 1996, mixed media, 20x16
Hearing-Impaired: Wrong Way, Deaf: Right Way, 1992, mixed media, 20x16
Deaf & Dumb 1903, Deaf, 1993, 1993, mixed media, 16x20

Marjorie Stout

- Black and White: Deafness With Noise, 1990, acrylic, 36x48
Sound, 1990, acrylic, 36x48

Robin Taylor

- Avenue of Loss, 1998
Bronze, Stainless Steel, Copper on Marble base, 15x12x8
(Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Bruce)

Sandi Inches Vasnick

- Silence, 1989, batik, 21x16

Alex Wilhite

- Camera, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 24x18
Kiln, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 24x18
Red Sea, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 24x18
Spaced of Wings, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 18x80
Waterstream II, 1997 acrylic on canvas, 80x18

Harry R. Williams

- A Violin Becomes an Artist, 1983, oil on wood, 18x40x1
(courtesy of Betty G. Miller)

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the following:

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Touring exhibit participating artists: Chuck Baird, Irene Bartok, Uzi Buzaglo, Susan Dupor, Paul Johnston, Thad C. Martin, Tony Landon McGregor, Betty G. Miller, Joan Popovich-Kutscher, Orkid Sassouni, Ann Silver, Marjorie Stout, Robin Taylor, Sandi Inches Vasnick, Alex Wilhite, and Harry R. Williams.

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Special thanks to 10-year-old Jaime Harter and her parents for allowing the use of Chuck Baird's Art No. 2 to create the posters for the touring exhibit.

Advisory Board members Dr. Deborah Sonnenstrahl, former chair, Art Department, Gallaudet University; Dr. Benjamin Bahan, Chair, Deaf Studies Department, Gallaudet University; Elizabeth Cromley, Chair, Dept. of Art and Architecture, Northeastern University; Barbara Jean Wood, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Susan Becherer, Outreach Specialist, Center for the Arts, Northeastern University; Elsa Nunez, Provost, Lesley College, Boston for providing support to the touring exhibit.

John Dunleavy for assisting with the editing of the exhibit brochures and with the design and implementation of the web site www.Deafart.org.

Harlan Lane for his encouragement and support for the concept of this Touring Exhibit of Deaf Culture Art.

We would like to acknowledge the support of our touring exhibit sponsors:

Seattle, WA

Robert Roth, who initiated contact with the Bank of America Gallery. Peggy Weiss and Jennifer Mills at the Bank of America Gallery for their support and for their superb presentation of the Seattle premiere of this exhibit at their gallery. Laura Cospito, of Hearing, Speech and Deafness Center, Debbie Ennis and Eric Scheir of the Washington American Sign Language Association for providing publicity and community support to the exhibit.

Rochester, NY

Robert Baker, Director of Special Events and Visitations, NTID for his enthusiasm in sponsoring the touring exhibit at NTID. Frank Kruppenbacher, Department and Marketing Communications at NTID for providing publicity for the Rochester exhibit.

Miami, FL

Steve Larew, Director, Gallaudet University Regional Center at Flagler College, St. Augustine, FL in agreeing to host the Florida exhibit. Taras Denis, Meme Kerr Mitchell and Howard Watson for providing community support to the exhibit.

St. Paul, MN

Sharaine Rawlinson, Midwest Center for Postsecondary Outreach at St. Paul Technical College for agreeing to host the St. Paul exhibit.

Boston, MA

American Sign Language Program and Student Center and Activities at Northeastern University for providing administrative support and space for the exhibit. VSA Arts of Massachusetts, for financial contribution towards the Boston site of the touring exhibit.

Newport, KY

Bobbie Beth Scoggins, Executive Director and Virginia Moore at Kentucky Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, for sponsoring the Newport, KY exhibit sites.

Oakland, CA

Dr. Susan Rutherford, Executive Director of DEAF Media, Inc and Robert Roth, Executive Director of DCARA for enthusiastic support of the San Jose site of the touring exhibit.

¹ Lane, H., Hoffmeister, R. and Bahan, B. (1996). *A Journey into the Deaf-World*, San Diego CA: DawnSignPress.

² Elion, L.K. (1999). My Eyes Are My Ears: The Art of Harry R. Williams. In College of Continuing Education (Ed.), *Deaf studies VI: Making the connection*. Proceedings of a conference April 8-11, 1999 (pp.37-44). Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

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EXHIBITION DATES: April 27-May 16, 2000

Gallery open only to ASL Festival registrants and those attending the Marie Jean Philip Poetry/Storytelling

Competition Finals:

April 28: 12-3 pm

April 29: 9 am-12 pm and 1:30-4:30 pm.

Gallery open to public:

April 27: 2-4 pm & 7:30-9:30 pm

May 2: 10 am-2 pm & 6-8 pm

May 3: 10 am-12 pm & 6-8 pm

May 8: 3-5 pm

May 9: 10am-12 pm & 6-8 pm

May 11: 2-4 pm

May 13: 1-3 pm

May 15: 10am-12 pm & 2-4 pm

May 16: 10am-12 pm & 2-4 pm

EXHIBIT RELATED PROGRAMS:

Thursday, April 27, 2000 from 11:45 to 1:15 pm

Northeastern University American Sign Language Program's Coffeehouse Lecture Series will host Artist Talk with Chuck Baird. Room 135 Stillman.

Saturday, April 29, 2000

Brenda Schertz will provide a tour of the exhibit and discuss the history of Deaf Art. Open to NU ASL Festival workshop registrants only.

Wednesday, May 3, 2000 from 6 to 8 pm

Interpreter Club at Northeastern University/Northeastern University Deaf Club will host Deaf Film Night featuring several short films by Deaf filmmakers. Location to be announced. \$3 Admission.

For more information about the touring exhibit please call 617-267-5709 TTY, e-mail Brenda@Deafart.org, or visit www.DeafArt.org